

Committee on Resources

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Statement on behalf of

United Mine Workers of America

District Six

Before the

Committee on Resources

United States House of Representatives

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Mister Chairman and members of the Committee:

I am Babe Erdos, an International Union Executive Board Member of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) District Six. District Six has jurisdiction in all of Ohio and the northern panhandle of West Virginia. Our union represents the organized coal-miners in District Six and throughout our nation. I have worked in the underground coal mines of eastern Ohio and for the past twenty one years, I have had the privilege of representing our members here in District Six.

Mr. Chairman before I begin my comments I want to thank you for bringing your committee hearing to eastern Ohio and the heart of Ohio's coal country. I want to especially thank Congressman Ney and Congressman Strickland for their dedication and hard work in representing Ohio's workers and industry.

I address your committee today as a member and representative of an energy producing union. As an energy producing union, we have a keen interest in any environmental issues that may impact our members. As you will see from the following figures, history has proven us right in our concerns.

In 1970, the year the "Clean Air Act" was enacted, our union represented over ten thousand (10000) workers. In the mid 1970's, we had over sixteen thousand (16000) working members. In the early 1980's, District Six still had about eleven thousand (11000) members working. By the year 1990, working membership had declined to about four thousand (4000). Today it is less than half of the 1990 levels. As you can see, nearly ninety-percent (90%) of our members have lost their jobs in the coal-fields since our peak of the 1970's level. Although I do not have figures, the non-organized sector of Ohio's coal-fields suffered a similar decline in employment.

The northern panhandle of West Virginia has suffered a similar fate during this same time frame.

Ohio's coal production has suffered greatly as well. In 1970, Ohio produced over fifty five million (55,000,000) tons of coal. In the last four years, Ohio's coal production has ranged between twenty and

twenty five million (25,000,000) tons. This is in a state that has tremendous amounts of coal reserves and a state that produces nearly ninety percent (90%) of its electricity from coal.

With the uncertainty of future coal markets, it is difficult for mining companies and owners to make large investments in developing future operations. So what happens to our remaining coal miners? What will happen to their families and communities if our nation's policies were to dictate that the product they produce is no longer acceptable to generate electricity? Coal mining is a unique industry and profession. To many, it is more of a culture than a profession. More often than not, mining is located in rural areas of our country. It is no different in Ohio. There is usually little hope of acquiring another good paying job with any benefits in these small rural communities. In rural Ohio, many of these communities are based on "one industry". When coal mining, steel or other basic manufacturing jobs are gone, it is difficult for these communities to survive.

We all know the workforce in Ohio's coal industry is growing older. Most of us are third and fourth generation coal miners. What happens to all the retirees who depend on coal production for their health care coverage? Our union's health care funds spent over twenty five million dollars (\$25,000,000) in Ohio alone in 1995. This doesn't reflect costs of health care provided by employers.

I have seen a study estimating a worst case scenario of between 58,000 and 86,000 jobs lost in Ohio if the Kyoto Protocol were implemented as it is proposed. Most of these jobs would be lost in the manufacturing sector. It was estimated another thirty eight percent (38%) of Ohio's coal jobs would be lost. We in the UMWA believe because of the uniqueness of the coal industry and the rural settings of our mines and communities the burdens of Kyoto would fall unevenly on our region and industries.

Ohio is recognized as having one of the best Clean Coal Technology Programs in the country. In District Six, we believe environmental restrictions should be achieved through the implementation of clean coal technologies. This would preserve jobs and protect rural communities.

Thank you.